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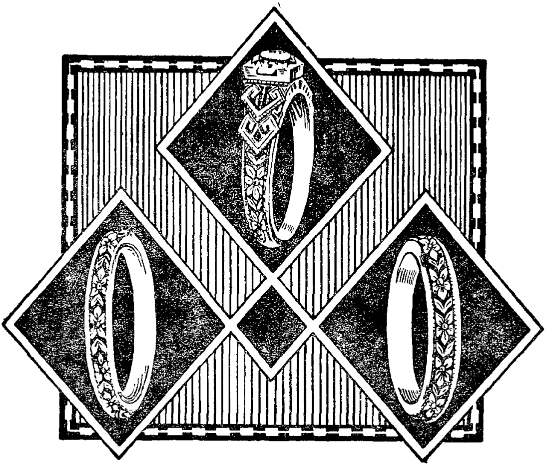

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KARMA DOWN THE AGES—II

After the Mahabharata war Utanga met Sri Krishna and put on him the responsibility for the ghastly massacre, saying that if Sri Krishna wanted he could have easily saved the situation. Sri Krishna was the Eternal ruler over men's hearts. Could he not then bring about a change of heart in the Kauravas and thus avert the catastrophe? 'I cannot' was Sri Krishna's prompt reply. 'Since they have their free-will I cannot coerce it but must wait until of its own accord it turned to good ways.'

Here is Sri Krishna with his charming freedom-gospel for the modern man who does not like God interfering in his affairs but wants to be a self-made man and not a God-made man. Often we ask, is life all effort (Karma) or is it all Divine Grace or is it fifty-fifty? The dualism of self-effort and Divine-grace can be freezed into a unity of the one or the other. Better into self-effort says the modern man. For it satisfies his self-conscious nature and his abounding utility sense.

Even a swell theory of deep philosophical import to gain acceptance today must prove its worth at the utility counter. If it can prove its worth at two counters, of individual utility and social utility, the better for the theory. The scientist who has observed in his laboratory the freedom of the electron and its unpredictable jump off its orbit, must, if he wants to be heard, relate his discovery to life and say that man is truly an electron both in individual and social life and that he is really free and unpredictable. Has the Karma doctrine got to say things which help us in our daily needs? Indeed it has. An action brings to us its results. It also leaves in us a mental residue, a tendency, the *samskara* that goads us to repeat the action. Now one fact emerges: that our actions are productive of fruits that cannot be put by and of *samskaras* that will be an impetus to us in future action. While the inevitability of the fruits of our past actions tends to foster in us a spirit of patience in, and resignation to, the tides in life, the possibility of carving out a bright future by the help of *samskaras* kindles in us hope and starts us on a life of endeavour and achievement.

Thus again we slip into the dualism of determinism and free-will. Yes, the Karma doctrine raises such momentous issues of life, like freedom and free-will into which we had a glimpse in our last part. If determinism and free-will are the two sides of the doctrine, action and knowledge are its two hands. Of these two hands that have helped us in our ascent up the difficult

ladder of Righteousness, it is rather difficult to say which served us as the right and which as the left. Neither of the two was uniformly right or left. There were times in the infancy of our race when the active element in us gaining top-form took us in a sweep over many miles of evolution. There were other times when knowledge carried the day. But none like the moments of sweet harmony between the two, when Martha (action) and Mary (contemplation) joined hands and took us right into the very citadel of perfection.

However the palm for having been the first to start us on the road goes to action. 'Action' became, active first, caught the chain on the side of the ladder and took us a few steps upwards. The oldest of our forefathers believed that righteousness was in action. The Karmakanda, the portion of the Vedas that designate works as the path to perfection and the Old Testament law of the Bible represent the oldest standpoint of righteousness. The emphasis shifts from action to knowledge when in the Jnanakanda (the portion enjoining knowledge as means and end) and in the New Testament is taught the doctrine of the worthlessness of works and the worth of knowledge. Both the Jnanakanda and the New Testament make salvation dependent not on anything done or left undone but on an inner transformation that true knowledge brings about. Gita comes, as it were, to strike a harmony between these two views and to give a very liberal interpretation and a wider scope to Karma doctrine. And this it did through its central thesis of Nishkama Karma which presupposes ripe knowledge within and action without. Then again the pendulum swings the other way to a narrow statement of Karma when Jaimini, the founder of the Mimamsa school cribs it into ritualistic action. In Puranas and Smritis Karma receives a tolerant restatement. The Nitya and Naimittika Karmas they enjoin, exhort us to a steady pious and religious life consisting of worship, prayer and meditation as also purificatory duties as occasions arise.

Thus though the oldest form of *sadhana* advocated is Karma and the indispensableness of Karma for the attainment of purification has been stressed by all schools of religious thought, we find that the emphasis has shifted with time and teachers. In these oscillations is to be found a covert quest for a harmony between the active and contemplative, the Karma and Jnana aspects of our nature, a harmony so necessary for progress and development of every sort. It was a harmony that was anxious for a liberal restatement of the Karma doctrine in terms of increased individual freedom consistent with social solidarity. In early society, life was simple and man sought his own salvation. Through rituals and allied paraphernalia he wanted to ensure a seat in heaven. But he slowly developed a social outlook and thought that if he could labour through rituals to please his imaginary gods why not in the service of his fellowmen? During the Upanishadic times this need for bearing other's burdens was not there. Every one bore his own efficiently and well, for the Varnashrama Dharma worked. It is said that then there was no widow whose tears needed wiping off, and no poor whose hunger needed appeasing. But in later days life and society became more complex. There was *varnasamkara*, inter-mingling of castes and functions and so Gita came to restate the Karma doctrine with an increased social stress. Of necessity Gita had to improve upon the existing teaching in two ways: in reference to the individual and also in regard to its expansion into social channels.

Before the advent of the Gita only certain particular actions were thought to be spiritual as paying for perfection, for instance, yagna, worship, etc. Gita came and declared all actions spiritual. 'Whatever work you do, by doing it well, you can attain perfection' : स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरत: संसिद्धिं लभते नर: But how? Bhagavan answers: यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥
'Whatever you *do*, whatever you eat,

whatever you offer as oblation, whatever you do by way of Tapas, do it all as dedication to Me.' This then is the royal road to perfection. Here is a teaching that appeals much to the modern mind. The modern mind sneers at the doctrine that only a certain particular work can make us perfect. All actions can make us perfect: Only put your whole being in the work. Let not the anxiety for enjoying the fruits increase the rate of your pulse, create blood-pressure, make you nervous and spoil the whole show. To avoid that invest the fruits in the Supreme and then you come out not only as the Master of actions, but the Master of the fruits as well. This is Gita's central teaching of Nishkama Karma.

Then Gita applies this to a social context. Yajna before the Gita meant *yaga* or sacrificial rites. In the Gita the term is used in the sense of *tyaga* or spirit of renunciation which must be yoked to action. Gita says that actions which imply self-denial of bodily self and realization of the higher self, actions done *for the good of others*, actions which are *tyagatmaka*, not only do not bind the doer, but positively help the agent to attain perfection. So the *yaga* must be yoked to social action, to the bearing of other's burdens.

Gita goes one step higher. It holds up the hero who sinless, self-controlled and enjoying supreme bliss is still intent on the welfare of all beings[1]. The Gita is very definite that the *samadarsana*, the same-sightedness that comes as the result of the highest knowledge must validate itself in *sarvabhootahiterati*, concern for the good of all beings.[2] Here is a perfection that does not recede into its shell but comes out to bear other's burdens, to fill up the other 'perfectibles' in the world. And it is done through Nishkama Karma, divinely dedicated action. Can Karma be better harnessed to social advantage?

In this teaching Gita rises to the highest peak of Indian wisdom. The ideal of it all is the harmony between action and contemplation, Karma and Jnana, between Pravritti and Nivritti, preserving the excellences of both is reached here. The most strengthening knowledge that reality is one and secondless and 'I' that reality, must fulfil itself in social service, according to the Gita by applying its shoulder to the wheel of world-progress, not at injury to itself but at great benefit to it and to others (*lokasangraha*)[3].

This view that Karma rises to higher levels when the spiritual perfection it has amassed labours for world- benefit, obtains a continuity in Buddha. Buddha bent his philosophy of ethical idealism to world-good. 'I will gladly bear the burden of everybody's suffering, if I could thereby bring relief to the world', Buddha is reported to have said.

Belief in the Karma doctrine found in Buddhism is the clearest proof of its connection with Upanishadic thought. But Buddha rationalised the doctrine to a considerable extent by clearing it of all supernatural and materialistic dross. In traditional Hindu view it is the divine power that allots pain and pleasure to men according to deserts. In Jainism Karma is spoken of as a subtle matter adhering to and pulling down the soul from its natural spiritual height. Buddha discarded both these and conceived of Karma as an impersonal law in the sphere of morality working according to its nature and by itself. The great merit of this interpretation lies in the emphasis that free-will receives in it. Buddha does not admit of a self, but speaks of an evolving consciousness, of a series of states. Though the present is cast by the past, the future is open to and depends on the direction of the will. Extolling free-will as against mechanism Buddha says, 'O priests, if any one says that a man must reap according to his deeds, in that case there is no religious life, nor is any opportunity offered for the entire extinction of misery'. Hence according to Buddhism there is infinite scope for endeavour and achievement. Buddha held this universe

[1] Gita: Chap. V. 25.

[2] Ibid XII. 4.

[3] Gita Chap. III. 20.

as a spiritual one ; not a mere mechanism, but a Dharmakaya, an order of Righteousness.

This doctrine without major changes flow down into the six *darshanas*. They echoe the views of Buddhism regarding Karma and transmigration. Of the six, Sankhya, Viseshika and Vedanta are in greater accord with Buddhism in this behalf, as they make the doctrine more rational, jettisoning all supernatural element and emphasising self-effort and free-will. In Yoga though God is admitted, free-will and effort are extolled as they can confer godhood on man.

Next we come to Advaita-Vedanta and its first systematic exponent, Gaudapada and his illustrious follower Sankara. According to Gaudapada, the individual reality in us is the same as the ultimate Reality, Brahman, blissful, uncaused, ever free, and non-dual. There is nothing other than this uncreate Reality. 'There is no dissolution, no birth, none in bondage, none aspiring for freedom, no seeker of liberation and none liberated. This is the absolute truth,[4] according to Gaudapada. In this picture of Reality, as uncaused, Ajativada, is there a place for the Karma doctrine ? We are the ever free blissful Brahman and the world has not come into existence at all. Where is the need for action then ? Gaudapada's is the standpoint of absolute freedom that is Atman-Brahman.

Sankara's position is essentially the same though for the understanding of the ordinary man he dilutes it a little. He says with Gaudapada that Reality is changeless and uncaused. But he adds that the world that we see is, as it were, a projection (*Vivarta*) of that Reality. If we don't see that sublime Reality but see in its place this phenomenal world, it is due to our ignorance, *avidya*. This ignorance can be banished and the light of knowledge brought in. Thus there is place for self-effort and free-will and so the law of Karma is assumed by Sankara.

Sankara's supreme emphasis on knowledge as the alpha and omega of liberation is the central part of his interpretation of the doctrine. सत्वस्य शुद्धये कर्म नतु वस्तूपलब्धये. Action or movement is competent to bring about purification and not the attainment of the ultimate. For this reason Sankara held Jnana and Karma as incompatibles. For him knowledge presupposes the consciousness of one's oneness with the All, whereas action presupposes the sense of duality, Kriyakarakaphala, for instance, I am the doer, I want the fruit, etc. For a Jnanin established in identity consciousness to split himself into duality consciousness which action necessitates is to commit suicide. A Jnanin may be doing action ; it is not action in the ordinary sense.

निष्क्रियात्मदर्शन संपन्नत्वात् नैव किञ्चित् करोति स:

'Even doing, he does nothing, because of the realization of the self as non-doer.' Here is the purest ray serene of the harmony between Jnana and Karma, a harmony that issues forth in Nishkamakarma. Action is an overflow of the abundance of the Jnanin, an overflow that benefits the world but never affects the knowledge of the Jnanin. It was such an overflow that we find in the preaching and teaching activity of Sankara himself, an activity that never injured his Jnana but validated it. One is tempted to compare the sweet words of Sri Ramakrishna, 'Keep your Jnanam in tact in your pocket and be doing actions. You shall not come to grief'.

In contrast to Sankara's exclusive emphasis on Jnana, is the view of Boddhayana, Bhatriprapancha and others known as Vrittikaras who held that final freedom can be achieved by knowledge conjoined with works such as Agnihotra. Later on this view received support and elaboration in Bhaskara's philosophy of Bhedabheda. While the Mimamsakas interpret Karma as ritual and lay no emphasis on Jnana, the Advaitin goes to the extent of condemning Karma and emphasising only Jnana. The Bhedabheda school takes a golden mean between these two extremes. Bhaskara

---

[4] *Gaudapadakarika* II. 32.

rejects both theories of subordination and contradiction and works up his theory of Jnanakarmasamuchaya, knowledge conjoined with action. Prabhakara and his school who belong to the later Purvamimamsa period accept this view. As theoretical knowledge supported by practical endeavour is necessary for achieving our ends in this world, so also Karma and Jnana are both necessary for spiritual progress.

The Sankara school may contend that Jnanakarmasamuchaya is logically inconsistent; but we cannot deny the fact that it is more true to life. Karma and Jnana, action and knowledge are inseparable in our daily life. It is the harmony of Jnana and Karma, renunciation and action that can satisfy our spiritual needs and the requirements of the nation today.

Almost consistent with this is the Visishtadvaitic view held by Ramanuja. According to him Karma is the inherent conative character of the Jiva and is a valuable element in Jnana. By devotion Karma is transformed into *kainkarya*, into a life of consecrated action where work is worship of God and his devotees. Ramanuja admits that *raga* (desire) is at the root of all Karma[5]. But *raga* by itself is neither good or bad. Its value depends on its direction and use. *Raga* may be Vishayaraga or Paramatmaraga. It is not the suppression or starvation of *raga* (sex instinct) but its sublimation and direction that is needed for one's own liberation as for that of others. Ramanuja consistently holds that sex instinct which is the power for all action, can be sublimated and transformed into the highest type of devotion, what the *gopis* had for Sri Krishna. Then Karma turns into Nishkamakarma or desire to attain desirelessness, or Paramatmakama, thirst after the Infinite which is devoid of the evils of ordinary action. Karma can thus be transfigured into something high and noble. This view of Ramanuja not only appeals to our hearts but also satisfies our reason. It is this philosophy of Karma and its practical application that India wants today. India wants thousands of young men who have sublimated their lower nature and who are ready for Nishkamakarma directed towards the uplift and amelioration of the country. India's heart is in Advaita, but her body is in Visishtadvaita. Her illustrious sons like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were rooted in Advaita but worked ceaselessly for the betterment of the country and the world.

[5] Compare McDougall in his Hormic Psychology: 'Instinct is the prime mover of all action.'

"ART FOR ART'S SAKE"

By Prof. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, M.A.

[*Art for art's sake, says the writer of this article, is no false or dangerous dictum. It does not ask us to throw decency to the winds. The aim of art is creation of beauty and what sane mind will find beauty in the repulsive and the vicious?*—EDS.]

Art is expression. The poet expresses his ideas in words; the painter gives expression in lines and colours to his mental images; mute accents become eloquent in the composer's melodies; the fancies of the sculptor give life to cold blocks of marble. Art is everywhere giving sensible forms to ideas pressing for an outlet. Expression seems to be its very essence.

But art is not mere expression. It has two aspects, expression and reception. The cuckoo that makes all the earth and air loud with his voice wants to court his lady in the bower. The skylark who pours his full heart in profuse strains is not forgetful of his mate. Man does not differ here from feathered creatures. He wants to touch by his songs his fellow being's heart. He cannot rest content with merely expressing his ideas in rhymes, colours, or figures. His art fails if it cannot move others' breasts. The poet may 'pipe but as the linnet sings', but his voice may be choked

on a sudden if it does not awaken even a single pulsation in a second heart.

What, then, is the inspiration of art? It is the irrepressible desire of the artist to transmit his feelings to other hearts. His fancies, his ideas, his caprices—all long to burst the shell of his narrow self so as to enter other selves and find larger homes there. 'Like the musk-deer', the poet says, 'I roam from forest to forest, maddened by the odour of my own limbs.' It is the musk of music in him that makes him mad. 'As incense longs to lose itself in perfumes, as a tune pines to be enmeshed in rhythms, so does an idea fret and fume for expression in sensuous forms.' Art is the medium of expression of such ideas and fancies. But it is not a vehicle of mere expression but of communication. It is an ivory bridge across the yawning gulf that separates mind from mind. It is the golden chain that links one heart to another.

But what sort of ideas does art transmit? Are they true, useful, decent and moral? Let me explain. I may rivet my eyes on a green meadow studded with flowers. But if all the while I think of the fertility of the soil I am a true farmer; if I am reminded of the transitoriness of things finite, I am a budding philosopher; but if, instead, I am lost in enjoying the beauty of the soft, velvety grass decked with smiling flowers, I am at heart a genuine artist. If I can express my feeling by means of colours or sounds so that it is sharable by others, I produce a work of art.

Art is worship of Beauty mirrored in the heart of the artist. It is an impassioned hymn to an idol designed by his own hand. The artist drinks deep at the springs of Beauty and in a fine frenzy presents us with pictures of her. Beauty, again, in all its forms, is harmony, and art is a picture of beauty tinged with emotion. In this respect also art has two sides, matter and manner. The matter of art is beauty or harmony, and its manner is its ability to awaken the sentiment felt by the artist himself in the presence of beauty. Sometimes the matter predominates, sometimes the manner. Only in a great work of art do we see a perfect balance. It is then and then only that we can say: 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'.

The capacity to enjoy beauty lies at the root of all art. Ever since his emergence on this planet, man has shown a great desire to taste beauty, has held it dear. For ages he has derived joy from the scent of the rose, the song of the nightingale and the glamour of the moon. An attachment to the beautiful has been one of the guide-posts on the long road of human evolution. Civilisation may go against nature in some ways, but in this case it helps nature by keening the edge of the aesthetic taste. For beauty is the food of love and love, the spice of life. Man is the child of Nature and his heart sings in tune with the voice yet inaudible in the air. The beauty of colours and tones is what Nature herself tries to produce and express, but fails to do so all alone. For this she needs the help of her dearest child, man, who alone can put into words her mute strivings and in the glory of aesthetic creation set forth vividly and eloquently what all the motions and gestures of dumb brutes were vainly endeavouring to express.

Life and art, then, are closely interrelated. Art, in a true sense, holds the mirror up to life and life would be quite cheerless without art. Art, however, is only one among other values and life is much wider than art. The value of art itself is two-fold, intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic value of art lies in the production of the beautiful on which we may feast our eyes and ears. The joy that we derive forever from a thing of beauty is the real gift of art. But art may have other values, too, which are extrinsic. Thus it may be a chief element in culture, it may give us moral lessons, it may have a religious appeal, or it may bring in great wealth for the artist. Art, however, does not fulfil itself in any or all of these ways. And if the artist has his attention fixed on

the extrinsic values,—if he cannot devote himself heart and soul to the worship of beauty, his feeling becomes artificial from the aesthetic point of view and he fails to produce a great work of art. Art is a jealous mistress, if there was ever one.

None the less, remark it as a thing worth remarking that art is not the only desirable thing in life, that it is not the only value. The doctrine of 'Art for art's sake' does not preach sovereignty for art in life but only claims its right of autonomy. It need not declare war on morality. For art is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. What the doctrine wants us to remember is that we should not assess the value of a work of art in terms of goodness. Beauty and goodness are two distinct and equally ultimate values.

Moralists lead a crusade against the principle of 'Art for art's sake'. Morality, they say, is wide as life and so must rule art. Goodness is the goal of art. Art should set before us a high ideal and show us the way to become better and nobler. It will picture not what happens but what ought to happen in life. But these gentlemen forget that art is barren when divorced from beauty. The artist may indeed inspire faith in a dream which is yet unfulfilled, but that dream is a dream of beauty. His vision is often illumined by a light that never was on sea or land, but the new raiment in which the object appears is one of loveliness, not goodness.

It is for the same reason that art is not imitation. He who in the name of Realism paints only the ugly and vicious is no artist. He may be a good photographer. Art is not a dispassionate reproduction of reality, but an emotional reaction to it. If, however, we want to retain the term 'imitation', we must mean by it the technique that enables the artist to communicate his imaginative inspiration. Hence if art is imitation at all, it is imitation not in the sense of mimicry but in the sense of the faithful translation of an emotional response. Art is the window through which we peep at reality and have glimpse of its beauty which is half revealed and half concealed by nature.

In this connexion it is essential to note the distinction between objective goodness and current morality. Morality,—not in the abstract, but as it is actually found in society,—can never claim to be the final truth. Moral codes differ from clime to clime, from age to age. 'The faults of Clapham are chaste at Martaban'. 'The virtues of one age become the vices of the next'. Hence if the artist heads a fight against the current conceptions of morality, that fight need not be against goodness itself. Age after age, the artist has delivered blows on the citadels of traditional morality and their custodians in mortal fear have poured forth venom on the 'misguided' rebels. Time after time one moral code has collided with another and mankind has somehow or other effected a compromise. If morality at any time tends to become the law of the Medes and Persians, art is welcomed as a deliverer of the human spirit. Paradoxical as it may sound, art gives us taste of truth through freedom. It is the gospel of Prometheus unbound.

It is well to remember that the greatest artists of the world did not find any antagonism between beauty and goodness. Shakespeare was never at pains to abide by the dictates of ethics. Milton indeed started with the aim of justifying the ways of God to man, but it is only because he half forgot that aim that he could produce a work of art and not a theodicy. Kalidasa would have smiled in contempt if you had asked him to be more 'decent' in his writings. Tagore disconcerts many of his admirers by the amazing frankness displayed in more than one great lyric And yet these masters raise us to a higher plane of life where goodness and beauty walk hand in hand.

'Art for art's sake', then, is no false or dangerous dictum. It does not counsel throwing decency to the winds. Art that is primarily and deliberately lascivious forfeits its name. For the aim of art is creation of beauty and no sane mind finds beauty in what is repulsive and vicious. While ugliness pains the senses and corrodes the soul, the fruition of art lies in the joy of creative frolics.

SCIENCE AND HUMAN VALUES

By Dr. S. K. Maitra, Benares Hindu University.

The conflict that we are witnessing today is a conflict between Science and human values. The present World War is only demonstrating on a colossal scale the dwindling of human values that has been going on for centuries, ever since, in fact, the beginning of the present scientific age. In spite of the terrible havoc that it has brought in its train, it has done one signal service: it has opened our eyes, in a manner in which nothing else could have done to the enormous possibilities of danger that are inherent in the apotheosis of Science that has been going on for the last three or four centuries. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Science, like fire, is a good servant but a bad master. Science can serve very well if you lead and she follows, but if you make Science your master, then God help you.

Ages ago, the same problem of the value of Science, which is agitating our minds today, presented itself before our forefathers and they solved it in a manner which was far more satisfactory than any solution that has been offered today. The *Chandogyopanishad* narrates the story of Narada, who was versed in all the sciences that were known at that time, approaching Sanatkumara for such knowledge as would enable him to cross over sorrow. Sanatkumara asked him to give him a list of the subjects that he had studied, so that he might teach him what he had not yet learnt. A long list of subjects was then given by Narada which included practically all the subjects that are taught in our universities today. Narada said that he had studied the Rigveda[1], the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, the Atharvaveda, Itihasa and the Puranas, the Veda of the Vedas, namely, grammar, the knowledge of the propitiation of the Manes (*pitrya*), mathematics (*rasi*), mining and metallurgy (*nidhi*), the science of supernatural calamities, like earthquake, fall of meteors, etc. (*daiva*), logic (*vakovakya*), ethics and politics (*ekayana*), philology[2] (*devavidya*), the Vedangas (*brahmavidya*) demonology (*bhutavidya*), military science (*ksatravidya*), *naksatravidya* (*astrology*), science of snake-charming, music and fine arts, including also the science of manufacturing scents (*sarpadevajanavidya*). Did Sanatkumara say, 'Well, you have learnt enough, and there is no need of imparting any further instruction to you'? No, he told him that he had learnt nothing but names. Nor, for the matter of that, did Narada himself think that he had learnt everything. If he had such a conceited opinion of himself, he would not have come to Sanatkumara at all He also had no illusions about himself. He also knew that he was only a knower of verses (*mantravit*) and not a knower of Atman or the ultimate value (*atmavit*). Such knowledge as he had did not enable him to cross over sorrow, and that was why he came to Sanatkumara. He begged the latter to give him the knowledge of Atman which would enable him to cross over to the other shore where there was no sorrow.

The contrast here is between the knowledge of names or verses, that is to say, facts, and the knowledge of Atman or value. Narada had gathered cartloads of facts, but had no knowledge of values. The knowledge that he had acquired could not give him what he wanted, namely, complete emancipation from sorrow, and hence his dissatisfaction.

The story of Narada and Sanatkumara makes one thing quite clear: Man cannot live on a diet of mere facts. He requires in addition to facts, values. These, however, Science is incapable of supplying, and

[1] I have on the whole followed Hume's translation of the passage where Narada enumerates the subjects he has studied, but I have also departed from it in some cases. For instance, *nidhi* is translated by Hume as chronology, but I have followed the usual interpretation of our Indian scholars and translated it as mining and metallurgy. So also in the case of some other words.

[2] Hume translates *devavidya* as science of gods. Sankara, however, takes the word in the sense of *nirukta* or philology, and I have accepted this interpretation.

the result is, that under the dominance of Science man has become a torso.

I stress the words 'under the dominance', for if the influence of Science had been checked by a proper cultivation of values the evil which we find to-day would not have occurred. The growth of Science is not an evil: on the contrary, it is a great *blessing. What is wrong is the apotheosis* of Science, the raising of her to the position of a deity. It is this which is at the root of all the troubles from which the world is suffering at present.

It would indeed be the height of ingratitude on our part if we were to forget the debt we owe to Science. She it was that put us on our feet again after we had lost the power for centuries of standing on our legs. She it was that showed us a new road to truth when the known roads had been blocked by the accumulated mud of centuries.

If Science had remained true to her original mission of seeking truth, the world would have had no complaint against her. But it was soon found that she was interested in only one kind of truth and in following only one kind of method for the discovery of it. That truth was sensuous or perceptual truth, and that method that of observation and experiment. As she made further progress and passed from achievement to achievement and her prestige rose higher and higher, her attitude towards other departments of culture became as didactic and dictatorial as that of religion had been in the hey-day of Church supremacy in the Middle Ages.

This is the situation as we find it to-day. The position of Science has become so strong that she practically dominates the whole of our cultural life. And as a result of this, the most essential human values have dwindled, if they have not been completely superseded. These values are mostly social values—values which make for greater unity between the individual and society and also for greater co-operation between nation and nation, race and race, and ultimately, for the realization of the great ideal of the Universal Brotherhood of Man. Here Science is constitutionally incapable of helping us. Rather it thwarts us. It puts, no doubt, more power in the hands of man, but it has no means of ensuring that this power is not abused. Rather, by remaining absolutely silent about these social values, it indirectly encourages the growth of anti-social tendencies.

Science no doubt by harnessing the forces of nature has placed tremendous power in the hands of man. But power without moral improvement is a great source of danger. And that is precisely what has happened today. Enormous powers of mischief have been given to people with little minds. What is this but an encouragement to them to use the power that Science has placed in their hands for their own private, and at the most, national ends?

It is to avoid this kind of tragedy, the tragedy resulting from the abuse of knowledge, that our ancient sages took particular care to see, before they imparted the highest knowledge, that the recipients of it were worthy of receiving it. The direction given in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is very explicit. It states: 'न अप्रशान्ताय दातव्यम्' 'it is not to be given to those who are not steadfast, that is, who are liable to be swayed by passions and emotions.' Does Science observe this rule? Is it not rather a fact that it is quite callous about what may be made of the knowledge which it imparts? But this is not all. In the present War, is it not a fact that the highest scientific talent has placed itself at the disposal of men who want to utilize it for forging the most terrible weapons of destruction, knowing all the time that it is doing so?

But apart from all this, the nature of the activity with which Science is occupied is such that it cannot lead to any lasting amity between man and man. She is occupied mainly with increasing man's productive power, precisely the thing which leads to the greatest clash of interests. It is the mad race for the production of goods which is the chief cause of war. Every nation

wants to beat every other nation in this race, and this gives rise to the worst type of competition, culminating in war. But the worst feature of this mad race is that it makes men totally forget the other and more important things of life, such as art, philosophy and religion, things which foster human solidarity.

Society is reared not upon the foundation of Science but upon that of morality. It is sympathy, co-operation and sacrifice which build the structure of our social life. Increase in the production of material goods, far from being conducive to the stability of society, rather weakens its structure by giving rise to keen competition and endless quarrels. Moreover, exclusive concentration upon the production of material goods, leading as it does to industrial civilization, is destructive of the most essential of all human values, namely, personality. This Tagore has shown very beautifully in his plays, *The Red Oleanders* and *The Waterfall.* In fact, if human personality is to be saved, eternal warfare is to be waged against Science with its soulless mechanism. Tagore has called this warfare the fight between Jack and the Giant. It is in the ultimate victory of Jack in this struggle that the hope of mankind lies. Man's hopes, therefore, are centred not in the advance of Science but in the eventual conquest of Science by his personality.

It would be a great folly, however,—nay, it would be idiotic—to cry halt to Science, as some philosophers have suggested as a remedy for the present state of things. As I have already said, it is not the progress of Science that is an evil, but her apotheosis. This apotheosis is due to the fact that the other sides of our life, such as those represented by art, philosophy and religion, which, from the point of view of values, are of *far greater importance*, have not made any progress comparable to that of Science. The remedy, therefore, lies not in crying halt to Science, but in paying more attention to these comparatively neglected sides of our life, wherein our most essential values are lodged, and developing them as vigorously as we have developed Science. In a healthy cultural life, where all sides of our nature have an opportunity of full development, Science, far from being a hindrance, is on the contrary, a great help. For in such a healthy life the results of Science will be utilized for the benefit of mankind and not as now, for its destruction. It is because the cultivation of the essential values has not kept pace with the march of Science, that the evils from which we are at present suffering have occurred. In fact, to employ a medical analogy, the disease from which we are suffering can be called a defective axiological metabolism, a kind of axiological diabetes. The remedy for this must be a drastic one, for 'diseases desperate grown by desperate means are cured.' It must, in fact, be nothing else than a radical change in our consciousness which will show the values in their true perspective. Until such a radical change occurs, the evils from which we are at present suffering will continue, and the sooner we realize this and give up this foolish habit of blaming Science and the scientists for all our ills, the better for us.

GITA THROUGH A MODERN EYE

By C. T. Srinivasan, M.A.

(Continued from the last issue)

Next I propose to examine some recent interpretations of the Gita given by two of our great national leaders, the Lokamanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. I would be criticising the views of our universally respected leaders only from the metaphysical view-point of the Gita as I understand it. I am second to none in my love and worship of these two great souls of India. Tilak wanted to make a political use of the Gita and this he could have done successfully without attacking the position of Sankara. A great scholar he was but essentially a politician, while Sankara was

out and out a Jnani or metaphysician. Each therefore was perfectly entitled to make use of this book in the manner he liked best and according to his intellectual capacities and in the light of the needs of the times. But in his *Gita-Rahasya* Tilak endeavours to trace the cause of the political decadence of our country and the subsequent loss of the martial instincts in us to Sankara's wide-spread advocacy of Jnana and Sanyasa. What a lack of vision! Sankara was wholly right to emphasise the urgent need for knowledge and renunciation. India was then facing the worst kind of calamity which meant virtually her philosophical and spiritual death. Rank materialism and atheism championed by the redoubtable Bauddhas and Carvakas were fast gripping the mind of the nation on one side and on the other a blind ritualism of the sincere but misguided 'purohits' threatened to plunge the country into a total darkness, and as if these were not enough, the sugar-coated poison called mysticism under the dignified name of Yoga was working havoc like the bubonic plague all over the country. Hence devolved upon Sankara, the super-human task of saving the country and his own fellowmen from what was their spiritual tragedy. No ordinary 'Rishi' or 'Jnani' could have accomplished this task so successfully within a short period of 30 years! No wonder that tradition holds Sankara to be verily Shiva Himself. The little dignity honour and self-respect that Modern India is able to claim despite her political degradation and economic bankruptcy in the present-day comity of nations are due in no small measure to the monumental work of our beloved Sankara who pointed out the spiritual glory and greatness of our soul as taught in the Srutis which remains deathless, unconquered, immortal and untouched by sin and evil. The philosophy of life-being-earnest can only be true of an Advaitin, for, he alone can *calmly advise his fellowmen not to show* any quarters to evil-minded persons and enemies, be they their own kith and kin or foreigners. Sankara's follower and disciple Vidyaranya, a true patriot and Jnanin, commanded an army and defeated the Portugese when they overran South India. In his *Panchadasi* he has shown how a true Vedantin should act in this world of good and evil. Tilak was wrong therefore in thinking that India has suffered much because of Sankara's Maya philosophy. On the other hand it would be more correct to state that the downfall of our country was due to not understanding the spirit and meaning of the Srutis which Sankara had pointed out a thousand times even to the utter disgust of some of his own fellow countrymen and which Vidyaranya re-emphasised later. If this world be absolutely real under the benign and merciful guidance of an Omnipotent Ruler or Iswara, He could have easily established a permanent Dharma crashing down all opposing elements forever without the need of His coming again and again to re-establish Dharma. But how does Dharma stand? Dharma gets polluted ever and again and is almost forgotten and as the *Bhagavatam* puts it, it stands on a single leg the other three legs becoming lifeless after Krishna's Niryanam. How does it happen so? The truth is that Dharma established either by God or by man can never be a permanent factor in a world that is based on the ignorance of the situation, the primeval ignorance that is rooted in our very consciousness and hence as powerful as knowledge. This fact is faced by the Lord Himself when He says:

> Whenever there is slandering of Dharma and prevalence of Adharma I manifest myself from time to time for the protection of the righteous and destruction of the evil doers and thereby for the re-establishment of Dharma. (Chap. IV, vs. 7 & 8.)

Let me now come to our beloved Gandhiji the friend of the mute millions of our country who have rightly paid him the highest tribute by calling him a Mahatma. Mahatma Gandhi quotes the Gita, interprets it for his own distinctive doctrine of Ahimsa and recites these verses in his morning and evening prayers.

My humble prayer is that he keeps clear of this book so far as his creed of *Ahimsa* is concerned. Nowhere do I find in the book the wide meaning that he gives the term 'Ahimsa'. The Gita is the teaching given to a hero of a thousand battles on the battle-field itself to rouse him up for the performance of a killing-duty on the simple plea that he was a mere instrument for the fulfilment of the Lord's own purpose. It is a creed of righteous violence which the Lord Himself sanctions and enjoins. Ahimsa is undoubtedly an important and attractive ethical code but is workable only when all nations consent to live and let live others peacefully. An ardent disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was making a fetish of this principle of Ahimsa by applying it even to the eating of the greens and vegetables. Reason and admonition from the Master did him no good. One evening when the disciple was approaching the Master as usual, the latter was found killing the bugs one by one that had infested his beddings. The disciple stood aghast and dumb-founded. The Master understood the situation and said, 'Innocent are the bugs! Are they? But each one of them drags me down to the earth earthy. Now understand, my young man, that whatever appears as an obstacle to one's own spiritual progress must be instantly killed outright without the least compunction or any fear of sin, lest it should survive to deprive you of your spiritual realisation.' Thus this Ahima was of no use against a Ravana or Hiranya in the past and is much less of any use against a Hitler or a Tojo. Man is born of Kama and Moha and the legacy of the *harishad-vargas* is already there in spite of the infinite virtuous possibilities of consciousness. It is a legacy, this natural ignorance, from the very birth itself which cannot be helped either by God or by man. Man has to subdue it and if that is found to be absolutely impossible then God takes the task on Himself and has to assume human form to destroy the effects of this all-powerful ignorance. The non-violence as taught by Gandhiji could find no justification in the *Bhagavat Gita* which enjoins righteous violence as the only remedy to eradicate evils which are otherwise incurable. To go out on a pleasure hunting-expedition into the heart of the forests to shoot innocent pheasants and patridges and even tigers and lions in their peaceful seclusions is abominable cruelty of the blackest dye. But when a snake is biting one's leg killing becomes a performance of one's own duty. And the Gita is a forcible enunciation of this doctrine. Let Gandhiji preach his creed independently like Buddha or Jesus Christ. But let him not do it in the name of Gita.

Let me refer also to another pet statement of Gandhiji. *viz.*, that God is truth. This statement that God is truth is as meaningless as the other common statement of the Visistadvaitins of both the Saiva and Vaishnava types *viz.*, God is love. Finding some inconvenience in it Gandhiji has now corrected himself by saying that truth is God. Either way his slogan is metaphysically untenable. What is truth and what is God? The terms truth and falsehood refer to human propositions or judgments but the term 'God' refers to the Reality that actually exists. The statement 'God is the Reality that exists' is called truth. None can therefore ever confound the Fact with a statement made about it. If Reality and truth be identical terms we then get the absurdity that God is a human proposition or judgment at best. This is the meaning of the 'Neti, not so,' of the Upanishads. When the Sruti makes a statement like 'prajnanam Brahma' or 'Ayam Atma Brahma', it at once proclaims 'Neti, neti, not so, not so,' meaning that Brahman or Reality is not to be confounded with mere statements made about it. Now truth is opposed to falsehood whereas God or Reality is opposed only to the unreality. Therefore Reality and falsehood can very well thrive together without being opposed to each other either logically or even grammatically as much as truth itself. The best example is Brahman and this

false world of appearance! The reason is that both truth and falsehood belong to consciousness which is nothing else but Brahman or Reality. Consequently if one were to define God as truth he should also necessarily define Him as falsehood as well. By way of escape the Sruti attempts to define God as *Satyasya satyam* or 'Truth of truths' but finding even this as inconvenient proclaims at once 'Neti, not so' lest Reality should be confounded with the mere statement *satyasya-satyam.*' Brahman itself is often-times identified with the mere name or word and the Sruti humourously calls it the Sabda-Brahman. Rare indeed are the souls who could understand, follow and appreciate the subtlety and sublimity of the Vedic reasoning which stands unique, unrivalled, matchless, and without any parallel.

Does the other statement of the Saiva and Vaishnava Visistadvaitins fare any the better? What is love or hatred? The terms refer to certain subjective feelings born of the *harishadvargas* which again are the legacy of our body or *kshetra* which is unreal. Therefore these subjective feelings are not to be confused with our soul or Atman and more so with God or Brahman. This is taught indirectly to Arjuna when he requested the Lord to describe to him His sublime manifestations without any reserve. The Lord says 'Of the cheats I am the gambling and among the glorious I am the glory. I am death and am the source of all life. I create vice and I create virtue etc., etc.' Therefore all such definitions of God as simple truth or love, however attractive and sweet they may sound to be, are to be rejected as being based upon a false view of life and an incorrect definition of the terms used. For *e.g.*, Mahatma's sincere threat of a prospective fast for the purpose of eradicating the growing evils of the present-day world like exploitation, black-markets, profiteering and what not, is due primarily to his confusion of thought. Let us leave these fasts and penances to the misguided ascetics who waste their precious lives in their foolish attempt to root out, tooth and nail, all the *harishadvargas* if that is possible or necessary or even beneficial at all. In my opinion, these ascetic practices are nothing but certain dangerous forms of inactivity albeit being called by high-sounding names and terms unless they are properly guided and controlled. Fasts and penances are no doubt made mention of in the Karma-Kanda portions of the Vedas. But there they are all strictly restricted to certain specific rites and sacrifices without which they have no meaning and last till the completion of that rite or sacrifice and are generally followed by sumptuous repasts. To translate and apply these Vedic practices to other fields of human life for which they were never intended and therefore most ill-suited and what is worse, to endow these fasts and penances with an inherent sanctity and halo of their own take one's breath away. I am not competent to pass any judgment upon these Vedic rites and practices about their suitability or efficacy in modern times. I leave that question to our great religious leaders like the heads of the Sankara Mutts and similar organisations. But as philosophers we shall have to raise our voice of protest when these vedic practices come to be misapplied as a cure and treatment of the modern political, social and economic evils.

We learn that after all these great teaching Arjuna actually forgot it! In the Anusasika-parva he asks Krishna to repeat what he had taught him on the field of Kurukshetra. This rouses Krishna to temper and Arjuna gets the well deserved rebuke. Generations after Arjuna we seem to remember the Gita much better than Arjuna! A great teaching cannot be repeated exactly as of old just as it would be impossible to reproduce a grand situation with all its original psychological settings like the eve of the Kurukshetra battle. Krishna begins to teach his disciple on different lines now emphasising the phenomenal nature of the universe. This is known as the Anu-Gita. We learn

from tradition that Arjuna forgot quickly this also. Next he was taught the Uttara-Gita which is a practical hand-book of Vedanta. Even then he was able to realise the truth of the Gita only at the very fag-end of his life. But all the time he had the intensest love for Krishna and should have at least remembered the hopeful words of his master:

'*Abandon all duties* and come to Me for shelter. Grieve not; I shall deliver you from all sins' (Chapter XIII v. 66.) Perhaps this express promise of the Lord may account for the daring forgetfulness on the part of Arjuna of the essential teaching of the Gita. In a state of intense devotion; highest peace is also possible because the object of worship is nothing else than one's own Real Self. This does not however establish duality nor does it disturb the ever accomplished Fact 'Ayam Atma Brahma'. There is a reference to the Gita in the first Skandha of the *Bhagavatam*. Deeply immersed in grief Arjuna weeps and recounts all his intimate memories of Krishna to Yudhishthira. His ideal Hero, his beloved Friend and Master is now no more. The consciousness of that thought is rather too much for him to bear. He has now reached a stage when he could not get the help of Krishna again to remove his despair and grief. This situation forces him to recollect the previous one he had on the field of Kurukshetra. That brings back to his mind those soul-stirring words of the Lord:

'Whence this wretched hesitancy at the wrong moment which no self-respecting man would approve, which slams the door of Heaven in the face of the hero approaching it and which would redound to your eternal infamy?'

The *Bhagavatam* then describes how Arjuna's *Dvaita Bhava* was destroyed once for all by remembering the Gita whereby he attained perfect Peace with his Real Self and Lord Krishna.

गीतं भगवता ज्ञानं यत्तत्संग्राममूर्धनि
कालकर्म तमोरुद्धं पुनरध्यगमत्प्रभुः ॥
विशोको ब्रह्मसम्पत्त्या संच्छिन्नद्वैतसंशयः
लीनप्रकृतिनैर्गुण्यादलिंगत्वादसंभवः ॥

A LAYMAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF PRAPATTI AND VAIRAGYA

By M. Kalidasu, B.A., B.L.

The conception behind Prapatti (Self-surrender) and Vairagya (renunciation or non-attachment) is the same and proceeds from the same necessity.

The body, mind, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara* of each individual have become intertwined, since birth, with the same Jivatma or Ego. Each one of them becomes identified with the same Ego by never-ceasing and intimate association with it. They have become accustomed to answer the demands and to cater to the needs of the same Ego. Name and form have gathered round it, coloured it and become indistinguishable from it. The muscles and nerves of the body have schooled themselves, during the course of years, to obey its directions sent through some brain centres and to make reports to it through other centres of the brain. The thoughts, emotions and resolutions of the individual have become indissoluble with the Ego. Nature weaves this web. That is Prakriti. While it is possible, not only to trace and comprehend this process but also to probe into the reason for it, no useful purpose is served by merely pursuing these inquiries.

The really essential thing is to bring into awareness of each individual the Divinity within. For this purpose, it is imperative to break the intimate relationship pointed out above and to dispel the illusion of identity. That can be done only by breaking the threads of the web, by unlearning what we have been educated into by slow and imperceptible stages. To put it forcibly, if somewhat crudely, it is only when a vacuum is created in the individual, that the effulgent Indweller floats up into consciousness.

To that end, absolute self-surrender, which can be achieved only by abandonment of an individual's desires, passions and activities and abject dependence on God is undoubtedly a potent method. Equally potent is the practice of the studied and deliberate dissociation of all thoughts, desires and activities from the Ego.

HARADATTA SIVACHARYA

By Sri Saila

Nestled between tall cocoanut groves and fields of waving corn, the tiny village of Kanjanur, *alias* Kamsapura, a few miles to the east of Kumbakonam, has been famous for a long time as a centre of religious and literary activities in South India. Swamis Swayamprakashananda and Narayanananda, the pillars of Advaitism, who flourished in the latter half of the nineteenth century were residents of this village. Its former glory is slowly vanishing and it is now chiefly remembered as the place of the publication of an annual calender in Tamil by an astrologer of that village.

Madhusudana or Vasudevacharya of this village was an orthodox Srivaishnava Brahman who had a son named Sudarsana. Though born of Vaishnavite parents, young Sudarsana had leanings towards Advaitism, probably because of the fame of the religious teachers of that cult at that time. The leaning was at first latent and was not therefore noticed. But when the boy, abandoning his *tulasi* beads and *namam* began to appear in public with sacred ashes and *rudraksha* garlands, his father became exasperated and tried every means to wean him from the new faith. The boy was ill-treated and his own mother was directed to refuse him food unless he renounced Advaitism.

The persecutions of the father, severe and unbearable though they were, had no effect on the son. In his distress he betook himself to the Siva mandir of the village and prayed to Lord Agniswara to take him under His protection. The prayer was heard, and young Sudarsana was initiated into Sivamantra by the Lord Himself, and was thereafter known as Haradatta (bestowed by Hara).

On his return from the temple, Haradatta tried to argue with his irate father and his ilk on the respective merits of the two rival faiths. It was then suggested to the boy that the discussion should take place in public and he agreed to do so in the Vishnu temple there. It is said that he sat on a red-hot iron tripod and, by numerous quotations from Vedic sources' convinced his audience of the superior claims of Advaitism. The result was that the entire assembly, including his own father, became adherents to Advaitism.

Haradatta became a householder in due time, and his few personal wants were satisfied by his ardent devotee, Sivalinga Bhupati, a local magnate. The daily routine of Haradatta included visits to the shrines of Kanjanur, Kotiga, Alangadu, Avaduturai etc., all situated at short distance from each other. One day he was somewhat late in his visit to the shrine of Agniswara where he saw the executive officer of the temple administering bodily chastisement to some *devadasis* for their dereliction of duties the previous evening. This sight gave him great remorse and he was seen to shed tears. At his interference, the derelicts were set at liberty, and immediately after scandal began to be spread about the saint's character, until he explained to the suspecting public that he wept because *he* had no such monitor to punish him similarly.

Innumerable are the instances in which the saint had exhibited his *samadarsana* and *siddhi* in his daily life and practice. One day he was offering *puja* to his tutelary deity at home when a dog came and showed signs of being very thirsty. Immediately Haradatta extended the vessel of *abhisheka* water to the dog which drank from it and ran away. To the persons who stood aghast at this sacrilege, he told that the Lord Himself came in that form and that there was no objection to utilise the remaining water for His *abhishekam* and he did so.

Haradatta was once on his way to the river for his daily bath when a *chandala* met him and requested food as he was starving for two days past. At short notice and at that inconvenient hour,

Haradatta hastily prepared some *kanji* (liquid food) and fed the *chandala* with it then and there. The next day, Sivakya Chola, the king of the country, was informed in his dream by the Lord Himself that the daintiest dishes which were offered to Him by the king that morning were not so sweet as the *kanji* offered by Haradatta. The king then invited the saint to his court and ascertained from him that the person fed by him the previous day was a *chandala*. Needless to say that both the king and the saint were surprised to note that it was the Lord who chose to appear before the saint as an unclean *chandala*.

The following Advaitic works are attributed to the saint: ***Chaturveda Saram, Tattvanirupanam, Hari Hara Taratamya, Ujvalam, Jnanaratnakaram, Sivadikya Sikhamani, Baktadikya Sikhamani, Saivagama Bhushanam, Vibhuti Rudraksha Panchaka,*** and ***Srikantabhashya Samarthanam.***

PRAYER IN ITS PROPER SETTING

Perhaps all of us pray or have prayed at some time of our life. But how many of us pray regularly and with all our being? Whenever we have prayed in all earnest from the bottom of our being, we have felt what a great treasure we walk over everyday without knowing it. We then make resolutions; but our excuses make other resolutions indenting for more time and for an urge more complete. To those of us who suffer from such incurable excuses Mr. A. J. Heschel has got very profound and convincing things to say in his article on 'Prayer' in the January number of *Review of Religion.*

Better the sigh of dissatisfaction of not having prayed properly and in time, argues the writer, than the punctilious satisfaction of having done your prayers quickly and in time. The former goes for the kernel of prayer, while the latter is satisfied with the shell. He tells the story of a poor shoe-maker who used to pick up their shoes at a late evening hour, work on them the whole night and part of the morning, in order to deliver them before their owners had to go to work. When should the shoe-maker say his morning prayers? Should he pray quickly the first thing in the morning, and then go back to work? Or should he continue his work, let the appointed hour go by and, every once in a while, raising his hammer from the shoes, utter a sigh: 'Woe unto me, I have'nt prayed yet!' Perhaps that sigh is worth more than prayer itself.

We too, says the writer, with convincing frankness, face this dilemma of wholehearted regret or perfunctory fulfilment.

What is prayer? It is our humble response to the Great Mystery that is our life.

To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain the sense of mystery that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living. It is all we can offer in return for the mystery by which we live. It is so embarrassing to live. How strange we are in the world, and how presumptuous our doings! Only one response can maintain us: gratefulness for witnessing the wonder, for the gift of our unearned right to serve, to adore and to fulfil.

Trembling in the realization that we are a blend of modesty and insolence, of self-denial and bias, we beseech God for rescue, for help in the control of our thoughts, words and deeds. We lay all our forces before Him. Prayer is arrival at the border 'The dominion is Thine. Take away from me all that may not enter Thy realm.'

Prayer is the essence of spiritual life.

Prayer is our attachment to the utmost. Without God in sight, we are like the scattered rungs of a broken ladder.

Prayer takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest] and enables us to see the world in the mirror of the holy. It is a way to master what is inferior in us. It clarifies our hopes and intentions. It helps us to discover our true aspirations.

Prayer teaches us what to aspire for. So often we do not know what to cling to. Prayer implants in us the ideals we ought to cherish. Salvation, purity of mind and tongue, or willingness to help, may hover as ideas before our mind, but the idea becomes a concern, something to long for, a goal to be reached, when we

pray: 'Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile; and in the face of those who curse me, let my soul be silent.'

Prayer is thus the essence of spiritual living. Its spell is present in every spiritual experience. On the globe of the microcosm the flow of prayer is like the Gulf Stream, imparting warmth to all that is cold, melting all that is hard in our life.

The essence of prayer is not a sense of barter or petitioning as some choose to think. The drive toward practical consequences is not the force that inspires a person at the moment of his chanting praise to God. The hope of results may be the motive that leads the mind into prayer, but not the content which fills the worshipper's consciousness in the essential moment of prayer. Even if prayer is a petition, what harm?

Our poverty is His. His property is ours. Overwhelmed with awe of His goodness, exchange our will for His wisdom. For this reason, the analogy between prayer and petitioning another human being is like the analogy between the ocean and a cup of water. For the essence of prayer lies in man's self-transcending, in his surpassing the limits of what is human, in his relating the natural to the Divine.

What then is the vision of prayer?

The main ends of prayer are to move God, to let Him participate in our lives, and to interest ourselves in Him. It is as if all our vital thoughts in fierce ardour should burst the mind to stream toward God. We try to see our visions in His light, to feel our life as His affair. We dream of a time, 'when the world will be perfected under the Kingdom of God, and all the children of flesh will call upon Thy name, when Thou wilt turn unto Thyself all the wicked of the earth.' We anticipate the fulfilment of the hope shared by both God and man. To pray is to dream in league with God, to envision His holy visions.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

1. **Village Theatres**: The Foundations of the Indian National Theatre—by Tandra Devi with a Foreword by Nandalal Bose.

2. **The Ten Plagues of Modern Civilization**: By Tandra Devi with a Foreword by K. S. Venkataramani. Cartoons by J. Patrick Foulds.

3. **Poems**: By Tandra Devi with Introductory Poem by K. S. Abulasar Hafiz (Jallandhari) and Foreword by J. H. Cousins, D. Litt. Pictorial Impressions by J. Patrick Foulds.

The personality and writings of Sri Tandra Devi, who has been for many years living and working in North-West India, are not as widely known in our Province as they deserve to be. She has been doing much useful work in organizing guilds of craftsmen and has written an enthusiastic and helpful pamphlet on *Village Theatres* and another on the national organization of crafts and industries (essays on the guild idea as applied to problems of industry and vocational training.)

Apart from these books of immediate, practical utility, she has expounded her philosophy in two sumptuously got-up volumes, a book of prose essays as wise as they are witty, entitled, *The Ten Plagues of Civilization*, and a book of *Poems*, to which Dr. Cousins has contributed a long and laudatory Foreword.

Like Margaret E. Noble, S. E. Stokes, Sri Krishna Prem, Verrier Elwin and other Brahmins from the West, Tandra Devi is out of love with modern civilization and has found in the heart of India the answer to her quest for happiness. She has lived in India for many years and has been till recently encouraged and supported by her son, the late Mr. Patrick Foulds, who was an artist of great power, with original and moving ideas and a bold, simple and effective technique. All the three books are profusely and strikingly illustrated by this artist and deserve to be treasured up for these cartoons and pictorial impressions, if for nothing else.

It is difficult to sum up in a few words the refreshing spontaneity and essential rightness of Tandra Devi's view of the world. As between the achievement of individual perfection by contact with Reality and the achievement of external organization and control over objects, she has no doubt that the first should come first. You cannot have a useful Cycle Brigade until each member of the Brigade knows how to balance himself on his own machine. The man who knows by discipline and control how to hold his balance on the machine is alone free to think of others and to help others. He has attained liberation.

The means of attaining such individual perfection are to her equally clear and simple. The method is that of complete self-surrender:

> "Lord I have only Thee—
> Only Thee!
> In all the world
> None other only Thee!"......
>
> "Thou knowest that in all the world
> I have none other—
> None to weep to—
> None to fly to—
> None to creep to—
> Only Thee only Thee!"

Tandra Devi has glimpsed the religion at the heart of the rival religions of the world and the poetry that is at the heart of many poems in many languages. She recognises that the importance given by education to the intellect at the expense of the senses and emotions has led to the destruction of the human spirit. To recreate civilization and to lead it back to the Promised Land, we have first to recognise the plagues that affilict us as indeed plagues and not as blessings. She opens our eyes to the strange but simple truth that Fashion, Speed, Competition, 'Appearances' (Respectability), Standardization and the other marks of modern civilization are plagues and not blessings. Tandra Devi's endeavour is to restore to the common life of the common people the beauty and glory which were theirs in the Middle Ages of Europe and till recently in the remoter parts of the Indian countryside. She wishes each one of us to become a Moses and to take humanity away from its present false, unhappy civilization to a true civilization where men and women will be human and therefore happy.

That she is not a vague unpractical dreamer she has shown by the concrete suggestions on organization and play-production that she has offered in her books for craftsmen, painters, poets and musicians. To students and others who are anxious to revive under modern conditions and with the aid of modern science our old village life and our traditional arts, Tandra Devi's works with their sound philosophy and their detailed prescriptions will offer both inspiration and specific guidance; for in Dr. Cousin's words, she is both 'a supreme artist in music and a supreme organizer of affairs.'

K. S.

The Yoga of the Saints: By V. H. Date, M.A., Ph. D. Published by the Popular Book Depot, Lamington Road, Bombay-7. Pp. 207 Price Rs. 6.

This is a book of gravity and clarity. Against a selective background supplied in the first four chapters by way of a brief and vivid exposition of the fundamental problems of religious psychology, the author presents in the subsequent six chapters 'a critical exposition of the structure, the mechanism and the function of the mystical life as found in the literature of the Saints in Maharashtra.' The religious data gleaned from the lives and utterances of Maharashtra mystics speak for mediaeval Hindu mysticism in general. The spiritual experiences of the saints are here subjected to a rational examination as we may expect from an observing student of religion, without scepticism or credulity.

The aim and method of this analysis of spiritual life are first discussed. Spiritual life is an organic growth rooted in the reactions of sensuous life; but, like the lotus rooted in mire, it blossoms in the fresh and pure atmosphere of God-realization. On the wings of morality and meditation the pilgrim soul soars to the empyrean of divine union. However, the rise o religious ideals and feelings in the individual need not always be the result of social influences. Religion is primarily a direct personal affair with God and social problems are only an accidental outgrowth. It is rightly stressed that the idea of worshipping God in the form of Society is a fallacy if it is not harbingered by prior worship of God in truth and spirit. 'To be truly useful to society after one has realized God, or to derive the social benefit for one's own moral and spiritual preparation is one thing; to deny and forget Him by being fired with the enthusiasm of social consciousness is another thing.' The whole personality of the saint responds to the call of the Divine here and now; and to the true mystic dogmas like rebirth and Karma need not be subjects of absorbing interest. Ramadasa is quoted to have said that the hard cash-value of Brahmic experience which can be had in this very life is incomparably superior to the possible shaky credit-value of the same in a distant life to come.

The grounds of religious belief and the transition from the sensual to the spiritual are next dealt at length. The belief that religious consciousness is sexual in essence, entertained by certain modern writers cannot stand scrutiny; for the two types of consciousness are diametrically opposed in respect of their objects, moods, faculties and acts. Citing a statement of Spinoza the author asserts that God-love and sex-love are love only just as the star Sirius is called Dog and the animal bearing that name is also called so. Religion is not the outcome of prejudiced propaganda in the interest of some pragmatic belief which works or results in right conduct. It is not a make-believe answering to no factual reality. The supreme object of religious experiences is a palpable reality to the mystic whose undoubted experiences disclose the factual existence of divine attributes which commonplace anthropomorphism has brought to suspicion and discredit. Religious belief is grounded in traditional, natural, moral, affective and rational elements. But belief in authority sanctioned by tradition is secure only 'so long as those who command and those who obey are bound by the common idea, because the truth embodied by it is the common objective dear to them all.'

The succeeding four chapters dilate on the Path, the training and discipline of the Yogi. Here, *in primis*, come intellectul preparation and moral uprightness. Spiritual literature comes to the initiated both as a tonic to the brain and sauce to the heart; it awakens the Sadhaka to the need of making strenuous effort, cultivating

deeper moral virtues and enhancing meditations, compelling the mind to bid farewell to idleness, ignorance, and unbelief. But intellectual training should not beguile the Sadhaka into scepticism and nihilism, nor even to the satisfaction in the mere verbal utterance of 'I am Brahman' without the banishment of egotism. A religious without morality is a hideous blot on spiritual life; while moral life without the spiritual is like a store of gunpowder which never explodes for want of a spark. The religious man is moral not because it is of service to humanity but because those who have seen God are moral and holy. Moral life is the backbone and pointer of the spiritual life. The Sadhaka imitates the meditative, devotional. and moral life of the Siddha. Thus faith in Guru, purity of life, meditation on God, zeal, love of solitude, company of the holy, truthfulness and patience are virtues to be incessantly sought on the Path by the prospective Saint.

For the practice of Bhakti, Yoga of Patanjali alone is not adequate although, the precepts of Rajayoga give extremely useful guidance in several respects. It is no drawback of that great work as the author seems to hint that it does not cover the ground which the Bhakta wants to tread, as the aims are apart. There is a very useful and thorough exposition of the nine-fold path of devotion propounded by Prahlada in Chapter VI. The Chapter on the nature of spiritual experience discloses the unique characteristics of the supreme mystic experience. The next chapter on the effects of meditation is an equally penetrating study of the expression of the mystic endeavour in life and action. The portrait and evolution of the Ideal Saint with which we come to the close, crowns this well-constructed book.

That the work has brought to the writer the doctorate degree speaks amply for its excellence of presentation and preciousness of contents. We daresay that it will be read with much interest and profit by even general readers of religion who have more than academic interest in mysticism.

Doctrine of Karma: BY SWAMI ABHEDANANDA (2ND EDITION) PUBLISHED BY SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA, RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH, 19-B, RAJA RAJAKRISHNA STREET, CALCUTTA. PRICE Rs. 3. Pp. 144.

This is the 2nd edition of the Swami's illuminating lectures in which, as the Publisher points out, 'the Swami expounds the philosophy of work in that lucid and vigorous style, which characterises all his writings.' There are seven chapters—the first four dealing with the doctrine of Karma and the next three with the philosophy of work. Two Appendices are added—on Delusion and on Heart and Mind—which explain further the points dealt with in the previous chapters. The detailed contents and the Index add to the convenience of the reader. The book has an attractive get-up and is priced moderately.

The doctrine of karma is one of the most distinctive contributions of Indian philosophy to the world of thought and is perhaps one of the most persistently misunderstood. The book[1] discusses it under four heads—the law of causation, the law of action and reaction, the law o compensation and the law of retribution. These are closely related and are only different phases of the operation of the same law. The law of karma is simply the law of cause and effect operating on the moral level: every cause in the moral sphere also producing its own effect. This of course, includes the law that the cause and the effect are equal and have the same quality—the law of action and reaction. The quality of *beneficent* causes and effects leads to the law of compensation and that of *evil* causes and effects involves the law of retribution.

The difficulty in understanding the law of karma arises from people somehow regarding it as something super-imposed on human actions by an external will, say the will of God and as therefore leading to fatalism and despair. This is a misunderstanding. The law should be regarded as an expression of the inner nature of things like say, the law of gravitation. It is in the nature of material bodies to fall to the ground when unsupported. An understanding of this fact saves us much trouble, makes many events meaningful. We can anticipate many things and be prepared for many results. The element of surprise disappears and the physical universe becomes manageable. The law cannot be evaded but it can be circumvented. When you come down the staircase you are careful; if you slip and fall down you have only to blame yourself. And when you have to climb the stairs you do not say that it is useless to try because the law of gravitation is against you. Any one will know that it is the stupidest thing to say. And yet, in talking of karma people use similar language and are not considered stupid!

'The law of karma' says the author of this book, 'teaches that the virtuous reward themselves and the sinners punish themselves by their own thoughts and deeds.' (P. 34). 'The same idea was conveyed by St. Paul when he wrote in the 6th chapter of his epistle to the Galatians (verse 7th) "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (P. 38). Again, 'karma creates nothing, nor does it plan or design anything. We create by our actions the causes of good and evil and receive reward or punishment as the reactions of our thoughts and deeds......' (P. 42).

Does this lead to fatalism? Does it preach a philosophy of helplessness? Does it make action unnecessary and unavailing? Not at all. On the other hand it makes action meaningful, tells us what we should do, invites us to take extra-care, if necessary, and put forth extra-effort in our actions. To refuse to act because karma is working against you would be like refusing to climb up the stairs because the law of gravitation is pulling you down. This is often forgotten and with it is forgotten the true philosophy of karma. To confuse it with fatalism or make it an excuse for inaction is a terrible mistake. That the mistake has been made even by men of our own country in the past and is often made even now cannot make it the less terrible.

The book under review does not give space to a discussion of this point. One would have welcomed such a discussion by the eminent author for then all doubts will disappear. As it is, doubts remain when one comes across statements like these: 'The doctrine of karma alone can explain the mysterious problem of good and evil and *reconcile* man to the terrible and apparent injustice of life (P. 40). The poor and suffering classes will find no *consolation* anywhere but in this one doctrine of karma. It is for this reason that there is so much of *contentment* among the poverty-stricken people of India. (P. 42.) (Italics ours)

The book is certainly inspiring and deserves to be widely read. A little more careful editing would have prevented the occurrence of minor errors, like: enveloped with smokes (enveloped *by smoke* l. 15, p. 10); producing absolute evil effect (producing an *absolutely* evil effect l. 17, p. 10); applying (*Applying* l. 14. p. 16); rise (*arise* l. 5, p. 19); to (*on* l. 14, p. 19); moves about among (*moves among* p. 32); passion (*passions* l. 23, p. 68); their (*there* l. 4, p. 83) One also wishes that the translation of Gita passages has not been so loosely done: there are so many good, standard translations which could have been used. A consistent system of diacritical marks is not followed.

It is to be hoped that these minor defects will be remedied when another edition is brought out: the importance of the subject and the eminence of the author guarantee a quick sale of this edition.

A. S. NARAYANA PILLAI.

Songs Divine: BY SWAMI ABHEDANANDA. PUBLISHED BY SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA, RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH, 19-B RAJA RAJKRISHNA STEET, CALCUTTA. PRICE RS. 2.

"The Songs Divine" comprises Sanskrit hymns to Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi from the inspired pen of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj with English translation in verses by P. Seshadri Aiyar, B.A., M.L. of the University of Travancore, and a few vedic passages with the English translation of Swami Abhedanandaji himself Besides, the book also contains an extract on True Prayer, gleaned from Swami Abhedanandaji's *Path of Realization*, Publisher's and Translator's Notes, a preface by Dr. Amiya Chakrabarty, M.A , D.Phil (Oxon), a Glossary of Sanskrit terms, and the Musical Notations of a well-known hymn contained in the book. Almost all the hymns presented here are very popular among the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and they are printed in various Indian scripts and chanted in different Sri Ramakrishna Maths and Ashramas. These hymns along with the few compositions of Swami Vivekananda have become for ever the canticle of the cult of Sri Ramakrishna by their sanctity, beauty, and authority. The present verse translation of them is the best we have yet, faithfully conveying the profound spiritual music of the original in flawless numbers of precision and charm. The Publisher has amply deserved the gratitude of all devotees of Sri Ramakrishna by bringing out the work in excellent paper with copious white space and in attractive type, in spite of the several difficulties in book production at this period of time.

NEWS AND REPORTS

To promote inter-religious amity and world understanding by helping religion to become a living force in modern life, an inter-religious convention was organised at Bombay in the second week of March.

The convention was inaugurated by Swami Sharvanandaji. Rt. Hon. Jayakar, Dr. H. C. Mukherjee, Madame Sophia Wadia were among the speakers. Swami Sambuddhananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay, was chairman of the Reception Committee and President of the General Committee.

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